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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council, and has the honour to enclose an aide-mémoire submitted by Belarus regarding its latest human rights records (see annex). The Permanent Mission requests that the annex* be published as a document of the thirty-eighth session of the Council under agenda item 3 in all official languages of the United Nations.

* Reproduced as received.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

Aide-mémoire: Belarus: latest human rights records

International stand

According to the latest 2016 Human Development Report of the UN Development Programme Belarus ranks 52nd in the Human Development Index and is among top countries with high human development.

Belarus reached ahead of schedule the Millennium Development Goals related to primary education, gender equality, the eradication of poverty and hunger, reducing child and maternal mortality.

National Human Rights Action Plan

Belarus has a necessary national platform for the promotion and protection of human rights, which includes legislative and institutional frameworks.

Belarus is one of the few countries that adopted National Human Rights Action Plans (NHRAP).

The Belarusian NHRAP was approved by the Government in late October 2016 and is a comprehensive one. It includes 100 measures aimed at promoting the implementation of the State's international obligations in the field of human rights including, inter alia, through the effective realization of UPR recommendations, human rights treaty bodies' recommendations as well as initiative steps identified as national priority.

While drafting around 40 national NGOs and the UN agencies in Belarus had an opportunity to communicate their proposals to the plan.

The implementation of NHRAP is monitored by the Government on an annual basis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the implementation and reporting processes. For the past period two reports were prepared to the Government and a number of results were publicly discussed.

The UN agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the implementation of NHRAP.

Among the key results of the NHRAP's implementation are the following:

- Accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adoption of the National action plan for the implementation of this Convention,
- Submission and presentation of all necessary periodic reports to the human rights treaty bodies, including on the implementation of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- Consideration of the State's periodic reports in a public and transparent manner,
- Encouragement of broader participation of civil society representatives in human rights events organized by State authorities,
- Promotion of public discussions of international trends in application of the death penalty.

Belarus is involved in realization of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as well as UNICEF and UNFPA country programmes, which contain human rights components, and actively cooperates with the UN agencies and other partners to effectively implement them.

Moreover, events dedicated to different significant human rights days, including Zero Discrimination Day, International Children's Day, are held annually with the support of the authorities.

Reporting to the human rights treaty bodies

Belarus is a party to almost all core international human rights treaties and seeks to report regularly to the treaty bodies.

Since 2016 to this day Belarus has held dialogues with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee against Torture (CAT) while presenting its reports.

The fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee is to be considered at its session this November.

The Belarusian reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are awaiting consideration.

Cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Belarus is eager to develop a constrictive and result-oriented cooperation with OHCHR.

In 2016 Belarus officially invited the High Commissioner to pay a visit to the country.

For a long time, Belarus and OHCHR fruitfully cooperated on the issue of combating human trafficking through a human rights-centred approach. A number of international technical assistance projects were successfully implemented in this area, including training courses for law enforcement officials from Belarus and other countries.

Belarus also invited the Office to support the implementation of NHRAP. Last October a needs-assessment mission of OHCHR visited Minsk. The OHCHR experts met with representatives of Belarusian line ministries and discussed the prospects of cooperation. As a result of the mission, a number of specific areas were agreed for possible technical support.

For example, in September this year a training course for State authorities on the topic of reporting to treaty bodies is planned to be organized by the Office.

Belarus has also accepted the nomination of a human rights adviser in the UN Office in Minsk with a view to facilitating the implementation of NHRAP.

Cooperation with the Human Rights Council's mechanisms

In May 2015 Belarus reported to the Council under the second cycle of UPR and as a result accepted most recommendations made by Member States. In December 2015 Minsk hosted the International seminar "Implementation of Universal Periodic Review results: consideration of a coordinated approach" organized jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Office in Minsk and supported by OHCHR.

Belarus issued a standing invitation to nine thematic special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

Belarus regularly provides special procedures with the information upon their requests.

Although Belarus continues not to recognize the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus, Mr. Miklós Haraszti as an exception was allowed to visit Belarus last year (not in his official capacity) in the framework of the annual OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Session in Minsk on 5 July.

Engagement with civil socicty

The Government is engaged in dialogue with civil society on different topics of human rights agenda.

On 12 May 2017 the Ministry of Justice of Belarus registered "Tell the Truth" public association.

In May 2016, December 2017 and April 2018 expert consultations between State bodies and civil society organizations were held in Minsk on civil and political rights issues as well as prevention of torture. They were initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with UN Office in Minsk and NGOs in the context of implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan.

These consultations were attended by representatives and experts of around 40 national NGOs representing the whole spectrum of views in the country.

Moreover, NGOs are traditional participants of numerous other thematic annual national and international events.

The practice of such exchange of views on human rights agenda is going to be continued

Bilateral human rights dialogues

Belarus is increasingly open and engaged with the EU and the US on human rights issues. Since 2015 the country has conducted annual bilateral human rights dialogues with the US and the EU.

Human rights are also a standing item on the agenda of the Belarus-EU Coordination Group that meets twice a year. Civil society organizations are invited by the authorities on a regular basis to contribute to the Coordination Group and Belarus-EU human rights dialogue activities.